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## ADDRESS

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As in the material world two opposite forces are necessary, to preserve the equilibrium, so in the world of mind the same necessity would seem to exist; and the conservatism of age is indispensable to keep in check the impetuosity of youth, while the vigor and daring of youth is necessary to prevent the stagnation and inaction of old age. If the one were wanting, there would be no progress; the absence of the other would result in perpetual innovation and change. Either without the other would be a bar to all improvement.

Neither the one nor the other sets a proper value upon the present. Age is apt to undervalue the present as compared with the remembered glories of the past, while youth views the present as nothing in comparison with the splendor of the ideal future. When the corner-stone of the second temple was laid, on the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, there was a mingled sound of weeping and shouting; for many of the old men wept over the departed glory of the former house, and the young men shouted for joy over the anticipated glory of the new one. [Ezra iii. 12.] And so it always is in this world; weeping and shouting, mourning and rejoicing are ever heard in seemingly strange combination. And so long as good and evil continue their contest for supremacy in this arena of human action, so will it ever be.

It was a very sad conclusion to which the wise King Solomon was led, as the result of long and extensive observation, "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." \* \* \* \* \* "There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after." [Eccl. i. 9-11.] In these words he expresses the great truth, that men will learn only by their own experience; that the experience of progenitors is of no avail to their posterity; the lessons of history are read with incredulity. We are always

ready to think that there are some modifications in the circumstances of our times that make the lessons of the past inapplicable to us. And thus it is that the world grows so little wiser with the lapse of years and ages. There comes a time, however, in the life of man, when he discovers the folly of this neglect, and when it is too late, gives utterance to the bitter words of unavailing repentance, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me." [Prov. v. 12, 13.]

The world fancies that it is growing wiser as it grows older, but the excavation of long-buried cities shows that many of the inventions upon which the moderns pride themselves were known to the people of centuries ago. The ever-changing fashions are but the repetition of those which prevailed in former times, and even of many of those things which we regard as novelties, it may be said, "there is no new thing under the sun."

The recorded events of history are so alike in successive empires which have arisen, flourished and fallen, that we have come to say, as a proverb, "History repeats itself." The simplicity of manners, the honesty and frugality, the industry and patience, which have laid the foundation of national greatness, have been followed by the vices which usually attend upon the accumulation of wealth and power, until sloth and luxury and licentiousness have precipitated their ruin. But, of what avail were the experiences of Egypt and Assyria, to the kingdoms that came after them? Are we, to-day, any wiser for the lesson written in the experience of every nation that has once flourished and decayed, that the perpetuity and glory of nations stand not in their material prosperity and æsthetic culture, but in the virtue and intelligence of their people?

Has not the history of the world furnished lesson after lesson to the nations, that "he that taketh the sword shall perish with



the sword?" Wars undertaken for the oppression of neighboring States, for enlargement of territory, for national aggrandisement, however successful at first, have they not been followed by the downfall of those who have employed them? And yet, with the experience of all the centuries, are not the nations, to-day, as mad in the career of ambition and conquest and plunder, as if no such record had been made for their instruction?

"Cassandra-like,  
Amid the din of battle, none will hear,  
Or hearing, heed."

It is sad to think that this is no less true of the history of the Church. Infidelity and heresies which appeared in the early periods of Christianity, though again and again refuted, still make their appearance in each succeeding age. The flippant unbeliever of to-day imagines that he has discovered some new objection to revealed truth, while he is only reproducing the stale and obsolete notions of those who lived some centuries ago, which have been so successfully overthrown that they have long been buried from public observation.

The great work of the preacher in bringing men to Christ is the same now that it has always been. The natural hostility of the heart to God and to what is good is the same that it has always been. The truths of our holy religion are the same which our Lord gave in the days when he dwelt among men. And His declaration is as true now as when it was first uttered: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John iii. 19).

To convince men of their sins—to set forth Christ as the only and the loving Saviour—to proclaim faith in Him as the only means of salvation—to urge upon the guilty the duty of repentance, and upon the pardoned believer the duty of constant growth in grace;—these are the topics for the pulpit, as they have ever been; and he who uses them with the help of that Spirit who is promised in answer to faithful prayer, need never be afraid of failure in the work of the ministry. These are the mighty truths that reached the conscience of Felix, and made him tremble; that extorted from Agrippa the confession, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" that swept the field upon the day of Pentecost, and delivered three thousand "prisoners of hope" from the bondage of Satan; that calmed the fears of the Phillipian jailor amid the terrors of the earthquake, and brought peace to his troubled soul; that reached the heart of the Athenian Areopagite, and made Dionysius a Christian convert; that broke the tyranny of superstition when Luther nailed his theses to the door of the church; that rekindled the almost extinguished light of Christianity when Wesley and Whitefield

preached in Moorfields; which has swept the States of North America "like an autumnal prairie fire;" and which promises, with the blessing of God, to move on with all its wondrous, saving power, till Christ "shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." As long as we are true and faithful to the pure doctrines of Scripture, we need entertain no fear on this score. Experience has fully confirmed the promise of the Saviour, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

There is a point, however, upon which the experience of the past may well awaken serious apprehension. Mr. Wesley had not read in vain the history of the Church, when he anticipated the danger to which Methodism would be exposed by its very successes. His sagacity led him to see that the industry and frugality of his converts would necessarily result in their accumulation of wealth; that wealth, as it always does, would exert its influence; that losing the simplicity of their religious character, they would aspire to worldly display and grandeur, and then their glory would depart. This disposition to seek after worldly position, to become great in the estimation of the world and to exhibit that greatness with pompous ostentation, seems inherent in the nature of man.

Under the Jewish dispensation it was strikingly shown. Though their dispensation was greatly inferior to ours, yet it was vastly superior to any other then known to the world. But they soon became dissatisfied with their theocracy and desired a king, like the nations round about them. They gradually perverted their whole system of religion; and their very temple, which was designed for the service of God, became the object of their idolatry. The thing signified was lost sight of in the undue importance given to the sign; the substance was lost in the shadow. The commandments of God were made of none effect by their traditions. The Church was exalted to the place of the Church's God. The warning voice of prophecy, foretelling the fearful results of this corruption, was raised in vain, and the declension proceeded from bad to worse until the day of retribution came. When Jesus, for the last time left the temple, "the Spirit departed, though the lifeless body yet remained, like royalty in the funeral chamber; but the torch of the Roman soldier was enkindling to fire the devoted pile, and reduce both the priesthood and temple to ashes, which the winds of heaven should scatter, and which no power on earth should be able to gather together again." [Stratton on the Priesthood, pp. 22, 23.]

From the time when Christianity conquered the Roman Empire under Constantine, the Christian Church, forgetful of the lesson taught by the history of the Jewish Church, has shown a disposition to indulge in the



same boastful spirit, and to arrogate to itself worldly splendor, and exercise worldly power. Despite the declaration of our Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," the Church has been too often found assuming the false position of an earthly kingdom, and seeking to invest itself with the prerogatives and powers which belong to worldly monarchies. For the personal Christ, living in her as the source of her spiritual life, there has been too often substituted the ecclesiastical organization, with its mitred priesthood, demanding the submission of men to her edicts and decrees, and even enforcing obedience with fire and sword.

With the freedom and intelligence of our times we think it impossible that these things which have been, shall ever be again. We boast of our deliverance from the bondage of superstition and ecclesiastical tyranny, and looking around us, we see nothing to indicate danger.

"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this?" was the indignant reply of Hazael to Elisha when the prophet foretold with tears the evils which Hazael should do to Israel. When Christ told Peter that he would deny him three times in that very night, the disciple was so shocked at the thought of so base a crime that he replied, "though I should die with thee, yet will I never deny thee." Poor human nature is unconscious of its weakness, and we are ready to repudiate the thought that we could be led by any temptation to do what we so grievously condemn. We smile at the superstitions of Popery, and wonder at the credulity of its victims; but it would be well for us to remember what Archbishop Whately has so admirably taught, that the errors of Romanism are to be traced to their true origin in *human nature*. Let us not suppose that there is a talismanic virtue in the names of Wesley and Methodism to prevent all who bear those names from being led away with the error of the wicked and falling from their own steadfastness. The Church of England to-day bears the name of PROTESTANT, yet how far have many of her children gone back on the way to Rome! And have not some of her most distinguished sons already taken the fatal step? The men who fled for refuge from persecution to the wilds of America that they might secure freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, would have been shocked if they had been told that they would soon be found engaged in the work of persecution for opinion's sake.

The possibility of spiritual declension and falling from grace is one of the accepted doctrines of Arminian theology. It is so fully and distinctly stated in the Scriptures, and so frequently and sadly illustrated in individual experience, that we never stop to question its truth. But the danger lies in this: that while we admit the general statement, we fail to feel its personal application

to ourselves. And this very blindness to our danger only makes it the greater. Who can imagine that with so pure a creed there is any danger of our going astray? Yet the Israelites, under the shadow of Sinai, while the echoes of the Divine voice were yet sounding in their ears, "Ye shall have no other gods before me," called on Aaron to make them gods to go before them, and worshipped the golden calf. So, too, Solomon, whose warnings against the lascivious woman have pictured, in fearful colors, "her house as the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death," felt himself beneath the temptations of the strange woman, and joined in the lewd rites of her idolatry.

Let us ask ourselves whether, in the less than 150 years of her history, there has been no departure from the simplicity and purity of Methodism in what pertains to the practical life of her members. Has no spirit of worldliness crept in insidiously among us? Has there been no yielding to the usages of unsanctified society? Has the virgin chastity of true religion not been sullied by the meretricious embrace of the world, so that what at one time would have shocked her sensibility, is now regarded with indifference, if not with positive satisfaction? Not many years ago, a Methodist would no more have thought of joining in the revels of the dance, or of attending theatrical shows, or horse racing, or card playing than of openly denying the Saviour who redeemed him. The line which separated the Church from the world, at least among Methodists, was so plain and clearly marked that every one saw and knew it. No plausible defences of forbidden pleasures, which were incompatible with the solemn vows to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, then found place among us. The preacher had courage to say, as John said to Herod, "It is NOT LAWFUL." He was not afraid to proclaim the words of St. James, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God;" and those of St. John, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and those of the Saviour himself, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Is it so to-day? The word of God has not changed, the requirements of Christ have not been altered: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Why, then, this laxity of moral discipline? this decline in spiritual life? Is there no cause for searching of heart? for humiliation and repentance?

"Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this."



But "stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls."

It was a wise and most Christian wish which St. John expressed for his beloved Gaius, that he might prosper in all things, and be in health even as his soul prospered; a desire that his felicity and temporal prosperity might be in proportion to his spiritual health. Can we desire anything more or better for the Church?

Attention might well be called to the tendency now so prevalent, to measure the piety of the Church by the increase of its membership, and the splendor of its church-buildings, and other external signs. These are too often boastfully mentioned, and sometimes with invidious comparison, as the indications of success and prosperity. Yet, how often are these ornate buildings erected upon credit, or borrowed funds, and the sympathy and loyalty of Methodists appealed to, to liquidate the debt? Or, if paid for, the amount expended for one such costly edifice might have built three or four commodious houses of worship, affording room for a much larger number of worshippers, and in keeping with the simplicity of Methodism. True, nothing is too good or rich to give to God, but it is a sign of spiritual declension when the furniture and drapery of a church-building become the objects of our pride and boasting, instead of the Divine presence and the power of the quickening spirit.

It was a fearful mistake which David made when he determined to number Israel; and the inspired record tells us that it was because of the sins of the people that the Lord permitted him to be tempted to do it. He turned away from the counsel of those who would have dissuaded him from it, and numbered the people from Dan even to Beersheba. The Divine reproof and punishment for his folly came speedily, and seventy thousand men fell before the pestilence in three days. The strength of the Lord's sacramental host stands not in its numbers. The kings of the earth may number their forces and count upon the strength of their battalions for war, by the multitudes or their people; but "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Let us not glory in men; neither in their riches, nor in their wisdom, nor in their numbers, "but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Have we not been led into a like error? Has there been no pride or self-sufficiency exhibited of late in the continual reference to our increasing numbers? How often are our calculations of what the Church is able to accomplish, measured by the numbers of her members, and their wealth and intelligence, rather than by their zeal and spirituality, and consecration to God?

#### What constitutes a Church?

Not high-wrought walls of polished marble,  
strong,  
With lofty towers, and spires that pierce  
the clouds;—  
Not frescoed walls, and sumptuous drapery,  
And long-drawn aisles, and cushioned seats  
that tempt  
The listless hearer to indulge in sleep;—  
Not the large numbers who in crowds may  
come  
To listen to the speaker's silver tones.  
Or, to the music of the well-trained choir.  
No: these are not the Church; but human  
souls  
Redeemed, and washed, and sanctified; in  
whom  
The living Spirit of the Saviour dwells,  
And fills with light, and love, and heavenly  
peace:  
Souls that have learned to bear the cross for  
Him  
Who died upon the cross to rescue them:  
Souls that live daily but to do His will,  
And by obedience justify their faith.  
These constitute the Church, the living  
Church,  
The Church endued with power, able to  
stand  
Against the malice of her hellish foes,  
And win the victory through Christ, her Lord.

Pardon an old man, my brethren, if he probes a little deeply. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." The fathers who, with toil and tears, prepared for you the fat pastures which you now enjoy, were very faithful in their dealings with each other. They watched over each other with godly jealousy; and if, at times, they seemed a little censorious, it was because, in some sense, they felt that they were their brothers' keepers. Their examination of character in Conference was not confined simply to the points of soundness in doctrine and attention to the collections, but to everything in manner and behavior which might militate against a preacher's character or usefulness. Frivolity of conduct, and light and foolish conversation they regarded as no trivial faults. They would have the man of God an example to the believers; one able to say, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

The cheerfulness of true religion need not be confounded with the laughter of fools; but the dignity of the Christian minister must be so maintained as not to give the adversary cause to speak reproachfully. "Ye are the light of the world."

If we confine our attention only to those things which indicate a declension of zeal and spirituality, we may become croakers, and lose all hope and heart. It is well, then, that we should also look at those which indicate improvement.

We may congratulate ourselves upon the advantages we enjoy over all our predecessors, in the facilities afforded us for the study of the Scriptures. The learned labors



of eminent men have shed additional light upon the true text of our sacred volume, and afforded the explanation of many of its difficult passages; while judicious condensation and compilation have made the acquisition of Biblical knowledge much less expensive in time and labor and money. A few well selected books of our day are equal, in their intrinsic value, to a large collection of fifty years ago. Just as the invention of the cotton gin and the steam engine have given a wonderful impulse to mechanical industry, so have the published results of the researches of our Biblical scholars given great impulse to our investigations of Scripture.

Another important advantage which we possess over our fathers, is the change which has been made in the size of our circuits. While there were some advantages in our former plan, particularly the bodily exercise afforded by the daily ride to the appointments, and the opportunity of perfecting sermons by their occasional repetition at distant points; yet the advantages of the small circuits more than counterbalance them. In our sparse and agricultural population the week-day appointments were necessarily very thinly attended, and the average congregation was very small. By the new arrangement the preacher has access to much larger numbers, and his opportunity for usefulness is much enlarged. Time is afforded, also, for pastoral visitations and becoming acquainted with the spiritual condition and wants of the people, and thus his pulpit ministrations may be made more effective. If the time saved from traveling is devoted to faithful and earnest study, what an opportunity is given for intellectual improvement! The increased intelligence of the people makes a stronger demand upon the preacher, and he fails to recognize his ministerial obligations who does not obey the apostolic injunction, "give attendance to reading"—"study to show thyself approved."

There is another feature of the times which is highly encouraging. The controversies on points of metaphysical theology, which used to be the bane of the Church, have well-nigh ceased, and the different sects of Christians have been learning to think more of the things on which they all agree, and less of those on which they differ. The Christian charity, which is the bond of perfectness, prevails extensively throughout the Churches, and they are beginning to present to the world a solid front in their spiritual unity as "terrible as an army with banners."

Another characteristic mark of these times is the large numbers of men offering themselves for the work of the ministry. If you will look into our Conference records of the early part of the last half century, you will find resolutions passed annually, appointing days of fasting and prayer, especially that the Lord would raise up and send forth la-

borers into His harvest. The fields were white unto the harvest, but the laborers were few. Now we have more men offering for the ministry than we can supply with appointments. If, however, we remember our Saviour's words, "the field is the world," there is yet ample room for all who, in the true apostolic spirit, are ready to carry the gospel into the regions beyond. The territory to be conquered for Christ is not limited by the narrow boundaries of State lines; and it behooves the young and strong who feel the mighty impulse of the Spirit moving them to take upon them this office and ministry, to consider well and prayerfully how far providential indications point out the great mission field as their path of duty. Never before has the heathen world appeared to be so ready for the reception of the gospel. Never have the conversions to Christianity been so numerous and encouraging. What Christian heart glowing with zeal and burning with love to the Redeemer does not long to join the advance corps of that small but heroic army which is planting the standard of the Cross upon the crumbling altars of idolatry, and pressing the battle to the gate against the powers of darkness? Responses to the call for volunteers in this glorious campaign are already beginning to be heard, and some noble youths have answered to the call. Royal and Loehr have joined Allen and Lambuth and Parker in the Celestial Empire, where the sainted Marvin so lately stood to cheer and animate the heroic band. Koger, from our own Conference, is already at work in Brazil; and McDonnell, of Georgia, has joined Patterson in Mexico. How long shall it be ere some more of the young men of our Conference shall plough the broad Pacific or the Gulf of Mexico to re-inforce this missionary vanguard?

And now, as if God were causing all the spiritual forces to converge to this common point, He has stirred up the spirit of the women of the Church, and with one consent they, too, are working in this great cause of missions. The alabaster boxes of precious ointment are poured out on the Saviour's feet, not to anoint Him for His burial,—the spices are prepared, not to embalm His body; but they are brought to shed their fragrance at his triumphant banquet and glorious coronation,

When Israel's lost and scattered race,  
With Gentiles hear His call;  
And come to celebrate His grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

What Christian heart does not throb with delight at the tidings which reach us from the remotest ends of the earth, that the dark mists which have overspread the nations are being dispelled by the bright Sun of Righteousness, and that the kingdoms of the world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

The children of the Church, too, are joining in this blessed work, and the Sunday-schools are bringing their consecrated offerings to the treasury of the Lord.

And now, in conclusion, what lesson shall we learn from all this? Not vainly to bemoan the departed past; not carelessly to neglect its salutary lessons. Lord Bacon said: "We are the real antiquity." Upon which Horace Bushnell admirably says: "In this he affirms, both that all the wealth of antiquity is accumulated upon us, and that we have it as material out of which to make a future. If we cast off the lessons of antiquity, we are not wise. If we allow ourselves to be the mere ducts of antiquity, supposing that antiquity is to repeat itself in us, we are not wise. But we are wise

only when we take note of the past, observe it carefully, study it respectfully, correct ourselves by its wisdom and its errors, and apply it to fortify our own free judgment and use." (Building Eras, by H. Bushnell).

If we do this, we shall perform, in some measure at least, the great work which was foretold of the Forerunner of the Messiah, in "turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." Conservatism and Progress shall then go hand in hand, when "the fathers recognize the new needs, and the new powers of the children, and the children recognize the value of the institutions and traditions which they inherit from the fathers." (Dean Stanley's Jewish Church, 3d Series).





